

Upcoming Events

June 2023

VA Pride Month

[National Caribbean-
American Heritage Month](#)

[PTSD Awareness Month](#)

D-Day

June 6

[Women Veterans Recognition Day](#)

June 12

Flag Day

June 14

Father's Day

June 18

[Juneteenth](#)

June 19

ORMDI

Steps Toward Conflict Resolution

You can contact ORMDI toll-free at 1-888-566-3982 (TDD/TTY, dial 711 before providing this number) and speak with a specialist regarding equal employment opportunity (EEO) complaint processing or harassment prevention. You must initiate contact with an EEO counselor within 45 days of the date of the alleged act of discrimination by calling 1-888-566-3982 or visiting your local ORMDI Field Office. The harassment prevention procedures do not affect rights under the EEO complaint process. Harassment should be reported immediately to a manager or supervisor, Harassment Prevention Coordinator, or the Harassment Prevention Program. For Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) services, email the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer [ADR team](#).

VA joins the Nation in observing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Plus (LGBTQ+) Pride Month in June. VA continues to demonstrate its commitment to furthering workforce diversity and cultivating workplace inclusion, and the LGBTQ+ community is an integral and growing segment of both our workforce and those we serve.

The Department's commitment to diversity and inclusion remains evident in VA's institution of policy and practices in accordance with established and enforced employee protections from sexual discrimination or harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity. This includes the enterprise-wide Equal Employment Opportunity, Diversity and Inclusion, No FEAR and Whistleblower Rights and Protection Policy Statement and associated directives and handbooks; training on LGBTQ+ cultural competency; consultation and survey-based needs assessments in these areas.

VA has become more welcoming and inclusive in its diverse workplace and remains proactive in an endeavor to recognize and incorporate best practices that further exemplify VA's commitment. VA's leading practices were further buttressed by President Biden's 2021 executive orders on [Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation](#) and [Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce](#) which foster the shared commitment that every person at VA, whether a customer or an employee, should be treated with dignity and respect. It is this simple premise based on the established principles of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Access (I*DEA) which benefits our entire workforce, representative of diverse backgrounds, races, national origins and ethnicities.

In commemoration of Pride Month, the Office of Resolution Management, Diversity and Inclusion (ORMDI) and VA National Virtual PRIDE will host VA's enterprise-wide third annual Virtual Pride Month. Through the collaborative efforts of ORMDI and this dynamic group of volunteers, VA continues to boldly lead in its charge to support and promote I*DEA. This year's theme, "We All Have a Seat at the Table", embodies the principles of I*DEA. The Virtual Pride event is a creative and innovative virtual platform that has proven highly successful due to the robust planning and execution of numerous programs, live events and trainings that support these initiatives.

ORMDI Deputy Assistant Secretary Harvey Johnson will kick off this highly anticipated series of events with a dynamic presentation on the I*DEA Influencers Network on June 1, 2023.

For information on VA's LGBTQ+ Special Emphasis Program or the upcoming virtual VA Pride Month event, contact Sterling Akins, VA's Departmental LGBTQ+ Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM), ORMDI. SEPMs should seek local management approval and consult the Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs and/or regional counsel as deemed necessary by local management to ensure that use of VA resources in support of a SEP activity is authorized. Visit [VA's LGBTQ+ Program webpage](#) for more information.

Commemorate

VA Pride Month 2023



DAS Johnson

Message from the DAS

Harvey Johnson, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Resolution Management, Diversity and Inclusion

Please join me in commemorating Women Veterans Recognition Day on June 12. Celebrated annually, this observance recognizes, honors and remembers the signing of the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act (P.L. 80–625, 62 Stat. 356), allowing women the right to permanently serve in the regular armed forces ([VA News](#)). It also provides the opportunity to recognize women’s military service throughout American history. For more information on VA services for women Veterans, visit the [Center for Women Veterans website](#).

Finally, I hope you are able to join ORMDI and VA National Virtual PRIDE for one of VA’s enterprise-wide third annual Virtual Pride Month events. Be sure to check out the calendar attached to the end of this issue.

LGBTQ+ Health Program

by Dr. Jessica Morris (she/her), National Education Manager, LGBTQ+ Health

June is LGBTQ+ Pride Month, an annual commemoration of the culture, achievements, and work toward equal rights of LGBTQ+ people. VA continues to celebrate Pride Month through honoring the experiences of LGBTQ+ Veterans, supporting LGBTQ+ employees, and amplifying messages of diversity and belonging.

This June is the first Pride observance for the newly staffed [LGBTQ+ Health Program](#) within VHA’s Office of Patient Care Services. Although the program existed as a small office for over 10 years, LGBTQ+ Health now has a clearer role in VA. The mission of the LGBTQ+ Health Program is to facilitate field-based policy recommendations, establish metrics, and develop clinical education to support affirming patient-centered healthcare for LGBTQ+ Veterans. The vision is that LGBTQ+ Veterans will choose VA and receive affirming care and services to achieve optimal health and well-being.

A major accomplishment for VHA is the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identities in Veterans’ VA records. LGBTQ+ Health is focusing on [Pride Counts at VA](#) which has a dual meaning of pride counting (being important) at VA and for LGBTQ+ identity to count (be taken into account) in health care. The **Pride Counts at VA** campaign informs Veterans that they can share their sexual orientation and gender identities within the health care setting and have this information securely stored in their medical records. Gender identity and preferred name can be entered directly by Veterans in [VA.gov](#) profiles and by certain VA staff. Sexual orientation identity can be entered by most providers in VA’s medical record systems. [Education](#) about how and why to discuss this confidential information is available for VA staff and Veterans.

LGBTQ+ Health manages LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinators (LGBTQ+ VCCs), who provide essential support for Veterans and staff at every facility nationwide. The LGBTQ+ VCCs four priorities are to: 1) create a safe and welcoming environment, 2) build a network of stakeholders, 3) build knowledge of LGBTQ+ services, and 4) educate and train VA staff. [Finding your local VCC](#) is easy.

This Pride Month, and throughout the year, help create a welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ Veterans and LGBTQ+ VA employees. Become familiar with the resources for patient and staff education. Display LGBTQ+ welcoming and affirming materials in your workspace and for Veterans. Talk to your facility about flying the progress Pride flag in June. Consider introducing your pronouns when you meet new people and add pronouns to your email. Share with all Veterans how they can have sexual orientation and gender identity included in their records. Promote the LGBTQ+ VCC program and patient education resources for LGBTQ+ Veterans to ensure that they get the person-centered care they need for optimal health. Honor the accomplishments of LGBTQ+ Veterans.

Pride Counts at VA because everyone has a gender identity and a sexual orientation. Veterans who are LGBTQ+ face increased health risks and unique challenges in accessing quality health care. We envision a VA where everyone feels comfortable and supported in sharing who they are.

Commemorate

Juneteenth National Independence Day

In June 2021, Juneteenth National Independence Day became the 11th federally recognized holiday in the United States; however, it was long celebrated in Black communities in Texas and beyond. Observed on June 19, Juneteenth is a significant historical event that represents the day when more than 250,000 enslaved African Americans in Texas were finally informed of their emancipation more than two years after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed.

VA joins the Nation in celebrating Juneteenth and honoring the progress that has been made. We also remain committed to further advancing inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility for all our employees and the Veterans we serve. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) National Virtual Black Heritage and History Observance Planning Committee will host a virtual Juneteenth celebration on Wednesday, June 14, 2023, at 1:00 pm. This Juneteenth presentation is an opportunity for healthcare teams to raise awareness, empathy, and action toward addressing healthcare disparities and promoting workplace equity and inclusion. To participate, register in TMS (TMS ID# 131008861) prior to the start of the event. For more information about this event, please contact Mrs. Amber N. Jones, VHA. For questions related to TMS registration, please contact Ms. Elizabeth Olinger, Health Care Education Specialist, VHA.

The ORMDI Veterans Benefits Liaison Office will host a virtual Juneteenth celebration on Wednesday, June 7, 2023, at noon. This celebration will incorporate learning through a live, re-enactment performance regarding the history of Juneteenth through literature and song. The featured guest soloist will be Ms. Lori Caudle, Program Analyst, VBA Central Office. Mr. Prester Pickett, M.F.A., Coordinator of the Howard A. Mims African American Cultural Center, Cleveland State University, will be this year's keynote speaker. To participate in this event, contact Mr. Sidney E. Odums II or Mr. Charlotte Camp, ORMDI.

Check your local area or facility's calendar of events for other celebrations related to Juneteenth National Independence Day. For more information on VA's Black/African American Special Emphasis Program, contact Ms. Tynnetta Lee, VA's Departmental Black/African American Program Manager, ORMDI.

Affirmatively Advancing Accessibility

By Roberto Rojo, VA's Departmental People With Disabilities Program, ORMDI

Although, the [end of the Federal COVID-19 Public Health Emergency](#) was announced by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on May 11, 2023, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Technical Assistance Guidance, [What You Should Know About COVID-19 and the Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\), the Rehabilitation Act, and Other EEO Laws](#), remains relevant, which also addresses how the [definition of disability](#) may apply to COVID-19 and [Long COVID](#). With the goal of affirmatively advancing accessibility, VA will need to continue compliance with EEO laws, inclusive of the ADA of 1990 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

The CDC's declaration dealt with issues involving health care and access to treatment. It did not address the ADA and Rehabilitation Act requirements regarding provision of reasonable accommodation. Specifically, [EEOC](#) states employers may not terminate automatically reasonable accommodations, provisioned due to any pandemic-related circumstances. Therefore, the end of the Public Health Emergency does not change Federal EEO law requirements to address on-going pandemic-related circumstances (for example, the continuance of high risks for [people with certain medical conditions](#)).

The [Department of Labor Office of Employment Disability Policy](#) announced the 2023 theme for [National Disability Employment Awareness Month](#), adapted to "[Advancing Access and Equity: Then, Now and Next](#)", to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. "[The Power of 504](#)", an award-winning documentary, highlights historic events related to the Rehabilitation Act (note that the disabilities vocabulary used during filming of the documentary has unilaterally evolved; the Department of Health and Human Services is referenced as the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare). The [Department of Justice](#) stated, "Section 504 laid the foundation for development of Title II of the ADA" and the amended Rehabilitation Act in 1992, "make[s] clear that the principles underlying the ADA also apply to all sections of the Rehabilitation Act, including Section 504."

Thusly, by all means, let us enjoy these new days together. However, let us do so with measured moderation and always mindful of commitment to service and to one another by continued compliance with long-standing protections for persons with disabilities and persons with targeted disabilities, leveraging lessons learned for exponentially evolving.

External Affinity Conferences

VA employees who plan to attend any of the following external affinity conferences/events are responsible for obtaining supervisory approvals. Please note that centralized funding is not available for attendance. Funding for registration must come from the employee's benefitting program office:

Society of American Indian Government Employees National Training Program

The Society of American Indian Government Employees (SAIGE) will host its 20th National Training Program June 20-23, 2023, at the River Spirit Casino Resort in Oklahoma. SAIGE is a non-profit organization representing American Indian and Alaska Native Federal, Tribal, State and local government employees. SAIGE focuses on professional development, leadership and Federal Trust Responsibility. Following supervisory and budget approval, attendees must also register on the [SAIGE website](#). For more information, contact Ms. Tynnetta Lee, VA's Departmental American Indian/Alaska Native Program Manager, ORMDI.



Society of American Indian
Government Employees

Federally Employed Women National Training Program

Federally Employed Women (FEW) will hold its 54th National Training Program July 9-13, 2023, at the Hilton Downtown Columbus Hotel in Ohio. The theme for this summit is "Leveling Up for Success: Ready, Set, Grow." FEW is a private membership organization working as an advocacy group to improve the status of women employed by the Federal Government, with a focus on four major program areas: compliance, diversity, legislative and training. The summit will offer workshops and briefings including career and professional development topics as well as personal development. Following supervisory and budget approval, attendees must also register on the [FEW website](#). For more information, contact Ms. Tynnetta Lee, VA's Departmental Federal Women's Program Manager, ORMDI.



League of United Latin American Citizens National Convention and Exposition

The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) National Convention and Exposition will be held July 31-August 5, 2023, at the Albuquerque Convention Center in New Mexico. LULAC's mission is to advance the economic condition, educational attainment, political influence, housing, health, and civil rights of the Hispanic population of the United States. The LULAC Federal Training Institute will provide attendees with workshops, plenary sessions, and other activities that are geared towards enhancing one's career and leadership development skills, with much emphasis on the Executive Core Qualifications required for entry to the Senior Executive Service. Following supervisory and budget approval, attendees must also register on the [LULAC website](#). For more information, contact Ms. Karen M. Basnight, VA's Acting Departmental Hispanic Employment Program Manager, ORMDI.



Blacks In Government National Training Institute

The Blacks In Government (BIG) 2023 Annual National Training Institute (NTI) will take place August 28-31, 2023, at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center in National Harbor, Maryland. This year's theme is "Accept the Challenge, Exceed the Standard Through Professional Development." The NTI will feature workshops, special enhancement programs and unlimited networking opportunities. BIG workshops will include innovative approaches, cutting-edge content and engagement of training attendees from varying government levels (local, federal and state). Following supervisory and budget approval, attendees must also register on the [BIG website](#). For more information, contact Ms. Tynnetta Lee, VA's Departmental Black/African American Program Manager, ORMDI.



Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities Annual Conference

The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) will host its 37th Annual Conference October 28-30, 2023, at the Hilton Chicago, Illinois. This year's theme is, "Championing Hispanic Higher Education Success: Diversifying Our Workforce and Strengthening America." The conference will include plenaries, luncheons, and networking opportunities, and it will provide a unique forum to share information and ideas for the most promising practices in the education of Hispanics. Following supervisory and budget approval, attendees must also register on the [HACU website](#). For more information, contact Ms. Karen M. Basnight, VA's Acting Departmental Hispanic Employment Program Manager, ORMDI.



Seeking Workforce Recruitment Program Recruiters

Consider Volunteering

Are you or a member of your team passionate about making VA a more inclusive workplace? Consider volunteering as a recruiter for the [Workforce Recruitment Program](#) (WRP). WRP is a nationwide program dedicated to ensuring equal employment opportunities and diversifying our workforce. Each year, the Department of Labor solicits Federal employees to volunteer as WRP recruiters. Recruiters meet with WRP candidates during a three-week period in October and November, providing career advice through virtual informational mock-interviews.

WRP connects students and recent graduates with disabilities to employers in the Federal Government, including VA. Combined with the [Schedule-A Hiring Authority](#), it ensures equal employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Volunteering as a recruiter provides opportunities to:

- Build leadership skills by mentoring applicants through informational interviews. WRP Recruiters conduct remote interviews with at least 8-10 candidates during a three-week period in October and November.
- Grow your expertise in Federal Government disability hiring initiatives. A brief online training will be provided by the Department of Labor during the summer.
- Support VA's efforts to diversify our workforce to better reflect the Veterans, their families, and caregivers we serve.

You can help make employment more accessible for all. Contact the [WRP staff](#) for more information.

Training

ORMDI Harassment Prevention Training

ORMDI hosts virtual "Overview of the Harassment Prevention Program (HPP)" classes the first Wednesday of each month from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. EST and 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. EST. All employees and supervisors are welcome. Search for course item number 4563938 in TMS, and choose a date and time to register. ORMDI will also host "Overview of VA Handbook 5979 - Harassment Prevention Program Procedures" on June 21, July 19, August 16, September 20, October 18, November 15 and December 20 at 11 a.m. EST. Executives, managers, and supervisors are encouraged to attend. Search for course item number 4627175 in TMS, and choose a date and time to register.

The Audacity to Fail Podcast

On this episode of [Audacity to Fail Podcast: misStepping Into Success](#), Dr. Shari Dade is joined by Dr. Adam Sumner, a staff psychologist with the VISN 23 Clinical Resource Hub focusing on outpatient mental health in a rural setting. Dr. Sumner's path to becoming a psychologist led through a variety of settings including community mental health, higher education and now the VA for almost seven years. He enjoys working in rural communities, health psychology and the opportunity to serve Veterans. He also loves getting up way too early to go running, trying to stay upright on a gravel bike, watching the never-ending soap opera of English soccer and coaching youth sports. Listen in for a discussion on the importance of juggling how to give, receive and seek feedback to improve workplace relations and engagement. The series is also available on the [Talent Management System](#).

C20: Take Your 20 for Veteran Health

C20 is a 20-minute live, interactive webinar hosted by Dr. "Chai" Chad Kessler, VA's National Director for Emergency Medicine. It brings together the VA community through discussions about clinical and health care issues facing Veterans and topics related to VA employee wellness, growth and retention. Join C20 every Tuesday and Thursday at 12 p.m. EST (recast Tuesdays and Thursdays at 4:30 p.m. EST). [Past C20 episodes](#) are available online.



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810 Vermont Avenue, NW (08) | Washington, DC 20420



VA NATIONAL VIRUTAL PRIDE 2023

Schedule of Presentations

Below is the summary of presentations for this year's VA National Virtual Pride 2023. We are excited to bring you some amazing speakers and topics this June in honor of Pride Month. Please join us as we take time to learn more about the LGBTQ+ community and grow in our understanding of how we can all better serve our LGBTQ+ Veterans, their families, and each other.

Registration is required to attend the presentations. The titles of each presentation are the hyperlinks to register for each presentation. Once you register for an event, you will receive an email with the link for the presentation to attend virtually.

Happy Pride!

Summary of Presentations

Week of June 1st – 3rd

[6/1/23 1330 EST - Opening Remarks – Kick Off Celebration](#): VA National Virtual Pride officially kicks off its 3rd year with honored speakers delivering opening remarks. At this time, speakers are being finalized.

[6/1/23 1400-1500 EST - I*DEA Influencers Network Presentation](#): Learn more about VA's I*DEA initiative and how to become an I*DEA Influencer.

[6/2/23 1200-1300 EST - Older LGBTQ+ Veterans: Age-Friendly Approaches](#): VA is the largest provider of health care to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people in the world and Veterans are significantly older than non-Veterans with a median age of 65. This presentation expands on a successful presentation for VA Virtual Pride in 2022 to highlight the experiences of older LGBTQ+ Veterans. Major events in the US Military, VA, and LGBTQ+ civil right movement will be reviewed. The talk will detail ideas and suggestions for creating a welcoming environment and providing affirming care for LGBTQ+ Veterans at VA. The context of cultural humility will be the framework for discussing the need of older LGBTQ+ Veterans. Resources for VA staff, Veterans, caregivers, and allies will be included.

Week of June 4th – 10th

[6/6/23 1200-1300 EST - JAHVA Dermatology Laser Clinic \(Tampa, FL\) Experience](#): Discuss experiences from the only full-time laser surgery center in the VHA at the James A. Haley Veterans Hospital in Tampa, FL. Addressing needs of gender diverse populations including temporary laser hair removal for gender dysphoria, pre-operative laser hair removal (electrolysis for temporary laser hair removal) for gender affirming surgeries and reconstructive procedures for scarring s/p gender affirming surgeries.

6/8/23 1300-1500 EST - How to be an Effective Ally to the LGBTQ+ Community: This introductory training will focus on key concepts related to the LGBTQ+ community (continuums of identity, pronouns, intersectionality), ways to identify and challenge implicit bias, and overview effective allyship skills. LGBTQ+ individuals experience stigma, discrimination, and disproportionate healthcare disparities. Within society, there is a lack of understanding about continuums of identity (sexual orientation, gender identity, biological sex/sex assigned at birth) and the importance of language (pronouns). While many individuals have good intentions, a lack of understanding about the LGBTQ+ community can lead to tense interactions and worse (e.g., healthcare disparities, discrimination).

Week of June 11th – 17th

6/12/23 1100-1200 EST - Veteran and Military Health Care – Education, Women Veterans, & Policy: Panel discussion on specialty health care for Veterans and military service members, women Veterans, and current policy concerns.

6/14/23 1100-1200 EST - Supporting LGBTQ+ Veteran and Military Families Through the Whole Health Model: Review unique challenges LGBTQ+ military service members, Veterans, and their families face. Utilize the Whole Health model for a holistic assessment of needs. Specify resources for support in alignment with what matters most to the whole person and family.

6/14/23 1300-1400 EST - A Legal Guide to LGBTQ+ Couples: This session will discuss the various legal issues you may need to consider when you decided to become part of a couple and share your lives with each other. Topics will include discussions of such legal issues such as name changes, renting (or buying) a home together and how to protect your legal status and inheritance rights as home owners, moving into your partner's home, cash and credit issues, who is a legal parent (i.e., adopting a child, fostering a child, health care decisions (powers of attorney and advanced care directives) and estate planning (i.e., will, trusts, etc.)

6/16/23 1200-1300 EST – MPOX: History of MPOX and the current outbreak. Presentation, prevention, and treatment. Inequities/disparities in affected groups and access to prevention and treatment.

Week of June 18th – 24th

6/20/23 1100-1200 EST - PRIDE In All Who Served: A 10-Week Health Promotion Group for LGBTQ+ Veterans: PRIDE is a 10-week health promotion group developed using human-centered design with feedback from LGBTQ+ Veterans (Lange et al., 2020). This presentation will provide an overview of PRIDE, Veteran-reported outcomes (e.g., reduction in suicide risk; increased identity-related protective factors), and ways to enhance access to PRIDE In All Who Served across VHA.

6/20/23 1300-1400 EST - Empowering Nurses to Provide Gender-Affirming Care Post-Operative: Over 134,000 American Veterans are estimated to be transgender. There are approximately 15,000 transgender people currently serving in the military. While support for transgender Veterans has improved, there are still challenges. In June 2021, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Honorable Denis R. McDonough announced gender-affirming surgeries would be covered by VA in the future. However, post-vaginoplasty wound dehiscence frequency is not known, local wound infections after penile inversion vaginoplasty ranges from 4.0-16.8%, and lack of experience and/or knowledge among nursing staff in post-operative wound care for this Veteran population. Therefore, the focus is to improve knowledge in the post-operative wound care for transgender Veterans undergoing gender-affirming surgery. Establish a continuum of care post operative through building relationships and programs with other VAs not performing surgeries to ensure safe and optimal outcomes congruent with the Veteran's wishes, and establish a standard of care within VA.

6/21/23 1100-1200 EST - Healthcare and Fertility Preservation for Transgender Patients: As an offered service at the VA, it is important for healthcare providers to understand fertility preservation for both transgender men and transgender women. Focus will be on information physicians and healthcare providers need to provide in this unique patient population. Routine health maintenance will be reviewed, as well as a thorough discussion of fertility preservation in both transgender men and transgender women.

6/22/23 1200-1300 EST - Taking an Affirming Sexual Health History: Sexual health is an integral part of overall health. Multiple recommended primary care interventions hinge upon the sexual history. Patients want to discuss sexual health with their clinicians, but many providers feel uncomfortable talking about this or avoid this altogether. Several disparities that affect sexual and gender minority populations relate to sexual health. The goal of this talk will be to provide recommendations on how to talk about sex and bodies with cultural competency and humility.

Week of June 25th – 30th

[6/28/23 1300-1500 EST - The Naked Truth: A Clinical Care Guide to Gender Affirming Prosthetics Helping to Improve Veterans' Experiences and Saving Lives with the Bare Necessities](#): Currently, very few clinical providers know how to properly determine what gender affirming prosthetic items are appropriate, what information to provide to Veterans about proper use and care, and how to assist Veterans in obtaining gender affirming prosthetic items. These gaps in knowledge decrease access to gender affirming care. This educational training will serve as a template and provide guidance on how to clinically determine what gender affirming items are appropriate for an individual.